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President: Mr. Matjila (Vice-President) ..... (South Africa)

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In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Mr. Matjila (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 9: Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/73/78–E/2018/54)

High-level panel discussion: "Addressing the challenges, risks and impacts of extreme weather events and climate change on the most vulnerable"

1. **The President** said that the panel would explore how the humanitarian system could better address the challenges related to extreme weather events and climate change and their humanitarian impacts. Participants would discuss how to improve preparation for and response to slow- and sudden-onset disasters and climate change, and identify strategies, best practices and lessons learned that could be harnessed to ensure prevention, resilience and the protection of vulnerable persons. The panellists would assess the implications of the disaster landscape and climate horizon for humanitarian action and opportunities for collaboration with development and climate actors. They would share their experiences at the national and regional levels, including responses to recent major disasters such as the Atlantic hurricane season of 2017 and the El Niño event of 2015/2016. Although in both cases, the collective response had been better than in the past, gaps, challenges and opportunities needed to be addressed in order to improve preparedness for future events.

2. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator), moderator, said that 2017 had been among the three warmest years on record and the warmest year without an El Niño event. In that year, drought and other climate-related events had triggered food crises in 23 countries, with more than 39 million food-insecure people requiring urgent assistance, and 19 million people had been newly displaced by natural disasters in 135 countries and territories. Yet the humanitarian sector had never been more effective, mobilizing more funding than ever and reaching millions of vulnerable people every year.

3. In response to the El Niño event of 2015/2016, one of the strongest on record, the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General on El Niño and Climate had produced a blueprint for action to guide Governments and partners in their efforts to prevent such episodes from becoming disasters. Standard operating procedures had also been developed to turn early warning into early action. Most disasters were predictable, but the current appeals-driven humanitarian funding architecture did not incentivize early action. The Central Emergency Response Fund and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs were exploring ways to employ more anticipatory, data-driven models of funding to promote early action. Response plans that were tied to contingency financing or risk insurance could enable a swift response. The private sector could contribute through humanitarian impact bonds.

4. The lessons from the El Niño event of 2015/2016 and the Atlantic hurricane season of 2017 included the following: national, regional and international actors needed to collaborate in managing disaster risk; evacuation plans, the pre-positioning of assistance and the predeployment of aid workers had saved countless lives in the Caribbean; and risk insurance had paved the way for recovery.

5. She invited the panel to consider how to ensure that early warning would lead to effective early action; what obstacles hindered response and how to overcome them; how to build capacity at the local, national and regional levels to enhance the resilience of vulnerable people to shocks; and how to ensure better coordination of preparedness and response at every level of government. Turning to Ms. Goddard, Director of the International Research Institute for Climate and Society at Columbia University, she asked how the main trends of climate and disaster risk would evolve in the next 10 to 20 years and what the practical implications would be for the international humanitarian system and its capacity to prepare and respond effectively.

6. **Ms. Goddard** (Director, International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University), panellist, said that climate variability was becoming an increasingly pressing issue. The dominant global trend, which would continue over the next 20 years and beyond, was temperature change, resulting in heat-related disasters and affecting rainfall. Changes in rainfall patterns led to an increase in the severity of storms and longer dry periods, which could have a measurable impact on agriculture and the viability of crops. Decadal-scale variability affected the Sahel in particular, where rainfall patterns were influenced by very small changes in ocean temperature patterns, potentially leading to very dry or very wet periods spanning several decades. Random variability could offset or exacerbate expected climate change trends, and natural variability could also interfere with expectations.

7. Global climate changes were putting more people and assets in harm's way, requiring more humanitarian

assistance and putting pressure on food and water systems. Given that the impacts of an El Niño or La Niña event were influenced by seasonality, if an event identical to El Niño of 2015/2016 were to occur in a few years, it would almost certainly have different consequences. For example, government officials in Kenya had based their preparations for the El Niño event of 2015/2016 on the unprecedented level of rainfall brought by the 1997-1998 event, but in 2015/2016, the rainy season had turned out to be only slightly wetter than average. While the climate community could not recommend what level of preparedness a locality should take, it could indicate precautions that would avoid a certain level of impact. Although El Niño and La Niña events were associated with the occurrence of a high number of disasters, they were in fact helpful in terms of preparedness and early action. During an El Niño or La Niña year, the impact of disasters could be more accurately predicted, helping to ensure that the necessary preparations would be made.

8. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked Mr. Prasad, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, to outline the key challenges facing Fiji as a result of climate change and the frequency and intensity of weather events.

9. **Mr. Prasad** (Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations), panellist, said that, for Fiji and many of the Pacific islands, the only certainty with respect to disasters was uncertainty. Hurricanes and cyclones, which used to occur from December to February, could now strike in May, and drought, which usually occurred in June and July, could now come towards the end of the year. As a result, it was difficult for Governments to make predictions and therefore plan for budgets, allocate resources and deliver on development targets. When events struck, funds had to be reallocated for emergency relief and long-term recovery efforts. Core development suffered as a consequence, with education, health, social services and care of older persons taking a serious hit.

10. Four sets of challenges would have to be addressed. First, given that the intensity of events would increase, exploring ways to de-risk the uncertainty and alleviate some of the pressure would allow Governments to focus on their core social and human development priorities. Second, with regard to the response to humanitarian disasters, the architecture of the humanitarian system needed to be more cohesive, with Governments, the United Nations system and bilateral and other development agencies working together. Third, political will was required to deal with the current level of uncertainty. Development partners, including multilateral banks, needed to ensure that they had the capabilities and levels of resources necessary for responses. Fourth, Governments should be aware well in advance of the instruments at their disposal for responding to humanitarian disasters. Innovative financing instruments were one such example; Fiji had issued a green bond in 2017, but a range of options could be explored.

11. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked Mr. Jackson, Executive Director of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, to outline the key lessons from the Atlantic hurricane season of 2017 in terms of preparedness, response and resilience at various levels.

12. **Mr. Jackson** (Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency), panellist, speaking via video link from Colombia, said that the weather events of the previous year, particularly Hurricanes Irma and Maria, had highlighted the exposure of the Caribbean region, making it all the more important to address the underlying risks. Current capacities were limited, many States faced challenges of poverty and of development planning, and it was difficult to respond to the impact of weather events on multiple islands at once.

13. The four areas of focus of the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy and Programming Framework 2014-2024 were institutional capacity-building; knowledge management for informed decision-making; key sectors of development in each country and the region; and community resilience, including early-warning systems and livelihood protection. Key lessons learned from the weather events of 2017 were that it was necessary to enhance response capacity for multiple catastrophic events; build and enforce standards and codes for land use and management; improve perpetual readiness, particularly for fast-onset hazards; address the enormous gaps in adequate disaster management financing, especially with respect to insurance instruments and contingent credit facilities, while bearing in mind that many Caribbean States were highly indebted and therefore had trouble providing financing for insurance to cover the risks they faced; and increase understanding of vulnerabilities and hazards.

14. A review of post-disaster reports had shown that it was necessary to expand efforts in five key areas. The first area was social protection mechanisms for the most vulnerable populations; many States did not have modern systems in place to deal with the impact of a

disaster. The second area was safeguarding infrastructure; more than half of losses were related to the transportation and infrastructure sector. The third area was economic diversification; the majority of investment was in tourism, which was related to coastal infrastructure and was sensitive to climate-related hazards. The fourth area was enhancing the environmental protection agenda; prosperity was linked to a sound environment and ecosystem. The fifth area was operational readiness; small States would bear the impact of climate events over the next decade.

15. With regard to resilience, a more comprehensive risk management agenda was currently being promoted and mainstreamed. Caribbean States were developing resilience and strategies for disaster recovery, balancing urgent needs with important preparations and working to better understand the requirements of a resilient community of citizens who demanded disaster restitution from the Government. Countries were considering incentives and disincentives to the creation of an enabling environment; the current period was transformational for those affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria and for States that had high debt profiles. It was also an opportunity to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals and relevant strategies into national development plans for disaster management.

16. The gains of climate mitigation and sustainable energy should be leveraged and financing for integrated actions plans should be harmonized. Debt reduction would enable countries to invest consistently in building resilience. At the same time, however, Governments must be accountable and funds must be spent appropriately on building resilient infrastructure, systems and societies. In many coastal States, development would need to be redefined, especially in places where the coastal area available for development was narrow and the interior was hilly and volcanic. Better coordination among all types of government ministries would also be needed, and relevant data and metrics should be employed to track the progress of projects. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 should be harmonized with the Sustainable Development Goals; investment in poverty reduction, environmental preservation, natural resource management, land use and urban spaces would ensure safer and more progressive societies.

17. Severe weather events such as hurricanes and tropical storms as well as geological risks would continue in the future even without a changing climate. It was therefore all the more important to have sufficient financing for disaster response, particularly for small island developing States. Donors and partners should be held accountable for the commitments made in the context of the Agenda for Humanity and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. In addition, regional and local institutions should play a leading role, competition should be eliminated, investment and operational readiness should be embraced, development financing should be leveraged, and States should focus on addressing underlying risk drivers.

18. Ensuring the necessary leadership and transformation in the public sector would present challenges in the future, and limited confidence would prevent local institutions from having access to adequate financing. Uneven political support for climate action and disaster risk reduction needed to be balanced out, and a more integrated approach to local planning should be taken. Law enforcement and legal systems would have to be improved and financing opportunities must be coordinated well so that good use could be made of them.

19. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked Mr. Idi-Issa, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel, how the Committee addressed the challenges posed by the recurring nature of drought in the Sahel, especially against the backdrop of high vulnerability and multiple, overlapping and mutually reinforcing risks, and how its approach to disaster risk management had evolved.

20. **Mr. Idi-Issa** (Deputy Executive Secretary, Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel), panellist, said that the Committee, which had been created by six countries in 1973 following many years of drought, was mandated to invest in combating food insecurity and desertification to find a new ecological balance in the Sahel. There were currently 13 member States, with Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Togo the most recent to join.

21. Since 2012, the European Union-led Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative, which had been piloted by the Committee under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union, had been developing standards for the implementation of resilience initiatives at the national level. The Committee had invested a great deal in regional cross-border water management and pastoralism programmes. A dialogue mechanism had been established to improve natural resource management and ensure the best investments and infrastructure for preventing conflicts and alleviating pressure on production. Best practices for sustainable

management had been implemented to conserve limited water resources, given the unpredictability of the rainy season. The Regional Training Centre for Agrometeorology and Operational Hydrology and their Applications had developed models for early warning and vulnerability analysis. In the Sahel, the rainy season was the most important season for agricultural production. Water management techniques had been adopted to enable production during the longer dry period. Techniques and best practices were disseminated to civil society, international non-governmental organizations and member States to make them available to communities.

22. The Committee had helped to establish institutional mechanisms for the prevention and management of food crises. Through the food crisis prevention network of the Sahel and West Africa Club, the Committee and its development partners, namely, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Famine Early Warning System Network, met annually to discuss the results of the analysis of risk zones. Dialogue frameworks were in place to enable development partners, civil society and Governments to come together at all levels to develop planning procedures for programmes and projects, as well as their follow-up and assessment. Since its creation, the Committee had strengthened dialogue and improved the capacity of its community and technical services on the ground. Its training centre on rural development assisted member States in building the capacity necessary to help villages.

23. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked Mr. Béavogui, Director-General of African Risk Capacity, to summarize how African Risk Capacity had been addressing the impact of El Niño and La Niña episodes and to share the agency's main achievements, as well as best practices and lessons learned that could be helpful for other regions.

24. **Mr. Béavogui** (Director-General, African Risk Capacity), panellist, said that, in the light of the frequency and unpredictable variability of climate-related events, African Heads of State had decided to establish African Risk Capacity in 2012. With financial assistance from Germany and the United Kingdom, the agency had established an insurance company in 2014 to begin pooling risk. By doing so, Governments had been able to transfer their risk to the market. Since the agency's creation, 33 members of the African Union had signed the establishment agreement, and 17 countries had active memorandums of understanding, a precondition for engaging in business with the insurance company. Eight countries had already purchased insurance, and the Governments had paid about $56 million in premiums and transferred underwritings of about $400 million to the market. Drought and other climate-related events had since occurred in four countries, Senegal, Mauritania, the Niger and Malawi, resulting in payouts. The agency was preparing for cyclones and excess rainfall, as well as developing products for outbreaks and epidemics.

25. The following lessons had been learned by African Risk Capacity: membership and ownership were essential in driving awareness; demand for products was increasing in both the public and private sectors; the implementation of insurance required a multidisciplinary network and real partnership, with consideration given to political sensitivities; despite the appetite of Governments to participate in insurance schemes, they faced budgetary constraints and fiscal space was tightening; and the role of donors was critical in stimulating insurance schemes and contributing to the overall humanitarian response.

26. Although insurance should be the last resort and was not a panacea, one advantage of it was that it allowed countries to receive fast payment. Another advantage was that, by pooling risk, countries were able to reduce costs and were motivated to address disaster risk management policy issues in order to build the right policies. Rather than inventing new ways of doing things, it was easier to scale up existing social protection mechanisms and tighten their link with the humanitarian effort on the continent.

27. With regard to constraints, he noted that climate insurance was cost-effective for high-impact, large-scale and low-frequency events, but was not always cost-effective for small-scale and frequent events. Insurance should therefore be part of a package together with other mechanisms, such as social protection and contingency funding. Another constraint was the difficulty faced by some countries, in particular in the Sahel, in paying the premium. Technology was still a challenge, and efforts were being made to build trust around the software currently in use, such as cutting-edge software for drought. Strong partnerships and the coordination and coherence of efforts would be required to face the challenges ahead. He hoped that the United Nations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would take the lead in that direction.

28. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked Ms. Lubrani, United Nations Resident Coordinator of the United Nations

Development Programme Pacific Office, to describe the key challenges and lessons learned in the Pacific region in terms of preparing and responding to disasters, and how the United Nations could support national and regional authorities in managing disaster and climate risks.

29. **Ms. Lubrani** (United Nations Resident Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme Pacific Office), panellist, speaking via video link from Fiji, said that her daily work as Resident Coordinator involved humanitarian support for countries in the wake of disasters. Given the certainty that a disaster would occur at least once a year in the Pacific, climate change disaster management had been a priority when developing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the region. The United Nations was also promoting risk-informed development and partnerships. For example, a disaster resilience council had been created in Fiji to enable the private sector to work with Governments and partners on humanitarian response and preparedness. She chaired the Pacific Humanitarian Team, which had learned many lessons from Tropical Cyclone Gita. The manner in which the United Nations conducted its humanitarian response was widely appreciated, and its work on preparedness had seen tangible results. Responses were tailored to the specific context of small island developing States, as well as to each individual country.

30. Efforts were being made to implement the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, which brought together the humanitarian, climate change and disaster agendas. Tools and mechanisms needed to be improved to assist Governments with post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Financing was important in that regard, but often took a long time to be delivered. Governance should be strengthened, as lengthy periods of recovery could lead to political instability, further stalling recovery and reconstruction efforts. Risk and preparedness should be mainstreamed in national disaster management offices and ministries to enable planning for quick recovery.

31. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) asked the panellists to respond to the question of how early-warning and early-action approaches could be integrated more systematically into the humanitarian system to create an anticipatory system, a question submitted electronically by the delegation of Germany via a real-time audience interaction and polling system.

32. **Ms. Goddard** (Director, International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University) said that the German Red Cross had provided significant support, enabling many pilot projects to be carried out. The Institute had been working with the World Food Programme and the Red Cross on early warning and early action with forecast-based financing, concepts that were at odds with the conventional methods of the humanitarian system, whereby a disaster would occur and its impacts would be brought to the attention of donors, who would then release funds to address the problems.

33. It was more difficult to mobilize funding for anticipatory action since compelling and heart-wrenching images from disasters did not yet exist. However, anticipatory action had great potential not only to reduce the loss of life and property, but also to save the money of the investors who were supporting humanitarian work. To realize that potential, the information being used in forecast-based financing needed to be objective.

34. International organizations such as the Red Cross could use the forecast of an El Niño or La Niña event, for example, to begin staging and planning for its results and to ask for financial input to address the expected consequences of the event. Localized information relevant to shorter time scales would be different depending on its source, and it was important to ensure that communities could use such information to take action. It would be difficult to design a one-size-fits-all approach.

35. It was also important to note that not all forecasts were equally useful. Some weather prediction and climate models were better than others; to a large extent, their effectiveness depended on how they were used. Even the best models were not perfect, and uncertainties meant that it was nearly impossible to judge whether any given model had accurately predicted an event. However, over time, it was possible to determine whether a forecast system was providing the right level of confidence. Quantitative uncertainty needed to be meaningful in order to make a cost-benefit assessment of information affecting a decision. Such assessments were, in turn, necessary to show donors that their investments were informed and fiscally sound. Verification of the information was also important, and States were encouraged to ask whether the weather, seasonal climate or climate change forecasts worked as advertised. Asking such questions would facilitate transparent processes to be used for humanitarian benefit by entities such as the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization.

36. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador) said that the humanitarian agenda, the climate change agenda and the

global disaster risk reduction agenda, namely, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, needed to be integrated to prevent and respond to both slow- and sudden-onset disasters. He asked how the humanitarian segment of the Council could bring added value to the discussions on uniting those agendas to avoid duplication of General Assembly resolutions and the work of the regional and global platforms of the Sendai Framework. The Council could help the entire United Nations system to recognize that the humanitarian impact of the environment and natural disasters was often felt by middle-income countries, which had neither the option of debt cancellation nor access to immediate financing on preferential terms. Indeed, after the Atlantic hurricane season of 2017, many Caribbean countries had reported that their current classification prevented them from gaining access to cooperation funds for long-term recovery. The Council could also advocate a risk-informed approach in the restructuring of United Nations country teams whereby all agencies would have to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to achieve the objectives set out in paragraph 18 (e) and (g) of the Sendai Framework regarding national reduction strategies and early warning systems, respectively.

37. **Mr. Hawke** (Observer for New Zealand) said that climate change risks would increase in the future, affecting smaller and island States in particular and thus posing a huge challenge for sustainable development and planning. Local communities as well as national Governments and the international community were more seized of the issue. Though there was no substitute for building capacity at the country level, it was important to start "thinking local". Disaster management offices and agencies were often small and marginalized and operated on a part-time basis. They needed to become a core part of the civil service working at the heart of public policy and planning. He asked how the political support of decision makers could be strengthened to bring more investment and longer-term planning for resilience and make it the core of public policy.

38. **Mr. Klose-Zuber** (Germany) said that it was well known that his country advocated a paradigm shift in the humanitarian system. Referring to the question read out by the Assistant-Secretary-General, he said that it was important to find ways to scale up early warning and early action approaches in the humanitarian system, and operationalize the system with scientific data. As one of the current challenges was the lack of willingness to invest unless there was 100 per cent certainty that a humanitarian crisis would occur, forecasting at different scales was vital. The seasonal forecasts of El Niño and La Niña should be combined with national weather information and short-term forecasts to define actionable windows of opportunity. The current practice was for Governments to wait until a disaster materialized and needs were certain before they took action.

39. Early action meant action taken during the period before a disaster struck in order to address it as an imminent threat and thereby reduce the suffering it caused, rather than responding to it afterward. Along with the Red Cross and the World Food Programme, Germany supported such an approach to developing forecast-based financing mechanisms; in that connection, clear scientific thresholds should be defined and linked to financing. That financing for early action was extremely important and would be integrated into mechanisms such as the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in which actions would be funded automatically as soon as early-warning thresholds were met. The Start Network and its Crisis Anticipation Window performed a similar function in the context of non-governmental organizations. In the United Nations context, the Central Emergency Response Fund was a very valuable instrument for funding early action; his delegation strongly advocated its deployment within the windows of opportunity between forecasts and actual disasters.

40. Lastly, the number of disaster-displaced persons worldwide was growing each year, and if the idea of leaving no one behind was to be taken seriously, more consideration needed to be given to the humanitarian protection of such persons. There should also be stronger links between risk reduction instruments, including forecast-based financing and risk insurances.

41. **Mr. Wang** Xu (China) said that natural disasters had a significant impact on his country and many of those disasters were climate-related. In China, the administrative arrangements for disaster prevention, reduction and relief at the central and local levels had been strengthened and improved. That approach included mechanisms for more robust cross-sector coordination, for more comprehensive area-based administration and for encouraging greater community and market engagement, as well as capacity-building for integrated disaster reduction. The country was also launching a new generation of a national platform for releasing emergency early-warning information so as to enhance capacities for monitoring, forecasting and warning of climate-related disasters.

42. China had supported and participated in international exchange and cooperation by way of platforms such as the United Nations International Conference on Space-based Technologies for Disaster Management, which it had co-hosted in 2017, and the Asian Science and Technology Conference for Disaster Reduction, which it had co-hosted in 2018. Participants in those conferences had focused on building resilience using space data, and had called on the international community to support scientific and technological innovation and investment for disaster reduction.

43. His country stood ready to enter into practical cooperation with all countries, United Nations agencies and regional organizations to improve disaster monitoring, forecasts and early-warning and information-sharing so as to jointly build up risk-management capacity and disaster resilience. It hoped that the good practices and experiences shared during the current meeting would serve as input for the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development.

44. **Ms. Chazalnoel** (International Organization for Migration) said that because the most common effects of disasters everywhere were forced migration and displacement, it was essential to consider the protection of persons affected by those phenomena. That fact was recognized in the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and much work was currently being done to incorporate migration and displacement management into disaster risk reduction planning.

45. In some contexts, mobility saved lives and allowed people to move out of harm's way. However, it could also compound vulnerabilities if it was not managed properly. As the most vulnerable were those who were trapped in a disaster area and could not move away, it was important to improve the management of migration and displacement. Doing so reduced inherent risks and was a central part of building resilience for vulnerable groups. She asked the panellists how migration and displacement should be included in humanitarian action in the context of extreme weather events and natural disasters.

46. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), referring to another question submitted electronically during the meeting, asked the panellists what steps could be taken to ensure that persons displaced by climate change received the international assistance and protection they needed.

47. **Mr. Lumumba Idi-Issa** (Deputy Executive Secretary, Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel), panellist, responding to the question posed by the representative of New Zealand, said that the issue of political will was delicate and complex; it was unfortunate that decisions were often guided by it.

48. With respect to the problems currently faced by the Committee, some proven tools for analysing vulnerability had been used for the past 30 years at the community and territory levels. The purpose of such tools was to reach consensus among the principal partners involved in combating food insecurity at the bilateral and regional levels. A harmonized framework for risk analysis was available, and all member States agreed to apply a cycle of data analysis comprising collection from specified places, analysis and processing to determine wet season, production season and other trends.

49. Certain member States had to contend with situations in which data was snatched and essentially held hostage by the most powerful party in the political apparatus, which then refused to release the data publicly. As an intergovernmental agency that depended on its member States, the Committee needed to wait for an official publication accepted by the member State in question before taking action. Regardless of whether all grass-roots actors or technicians at the local, regional and national levels agreed on the data, it was sometimes seized and used to leverage certain resources or even influence votes. In such situations in regions or subregions of a country, where the interests of small groups of decision makers were often prioritized, it was perfectly valid to ask some questions. Obtaining reliable data necessitated transparency in data collection and analysis as well as the involvement of all stakeholders at the grass-roots level.

50. Stakeholders needed to learn to work with each other more consistently in planning and action. At the end of the month, for instance, representatives of all member States would arrive in Dakar with data and official instructions to examine the situation in the Sahel. Political decisions needed to be as strong and transparent as possible in that type of setting in order to accurately determine where the bottlenecks were, and where and how to act. That would facilitate connections between humanitarian officers and the partners that financed long-term development actions, and also provide opportunities to tackle problems faced by communities.

51. **Mr. Prasad** (Fiji) said that the focus should be local action that was nationally coordinated and

internationally supported. Adaptation and resilience included many local actions, such as moving medicine in three- to four-month stocks to local health centres so that it was unnecessary to deploy the military to deliver assistance after a disaster. That would entail improving procurement, governance, storage capabilities and management. Adopting a climate-smart approach required many integrated local actions, and he would be interested in learning more about the methods used by China. The United Nations could play a role in providing reinforcement, support, knowledge and coherence for such actions. In a minor disaster, the bulk of the resources needed for assistance were furnished by the local government, whereas in a major disaster, the national Government provided most of the financing.

52. **Mr. Béavogui** (Director-General, African Risk Capacity) said that developing local capacities was crucial to achieving sustainability and efficiency. It was therefore necessary to strengthen public policies at the local and national levels, improve risk profiling capacities, plan well for contingencies and promote innovative financing and implementation. Continuous research and development, including expertise in mathematical modelling, indexing and social protection issues, among other areas, was needed in order to build a connected and effective system. Partnerships with experts in their respective fields were important for future progress and good results.

53. **Ms. Lubrani** (United Nations Resident Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme Pacific Office), speaking via video link from Fiji, said that there were good examples of cross-sectoral approaches in the Pacific region. In order to address disaster preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction, the new generation of country teams needed to plan and work differently from how they had in the past. In that regard, it was important to have expertise available in-house.

54. Climate-induced migration, as it related to displacement, was currently being studied and addressed by such entities as the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme, but more follow-up was needed. As an example of internal displacement, there were discussions about moving the entire population of an island of Vanuatu because of volcanic activity. It was important to consider such situations well in advance and account for all their aspects, some of which were quite politically sensitive, including access to land, property concerns and urban planning. In the Pacific context in particular, it was important to hone expertise and enable all parts of the system to best support Governments in their efforts to plan and respond appropriately.

55. Responding to a question about her role, she said that, as Resident Coordinator, she was tasked with bridging divides between humanitarian response actors and national disaster management organizations and ensuring that the latter were empowered and could turn their focus from one disaster to preparation for the next, with the seamless involvement of ministries of finance and planning. The United Nations was working with Governments in some of the countries where that would require a review of legislation and procedures.

56. **Ms. Goddard** (Director, International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University) said that the capacities of national meteorological and hydrological services and the agencies that they supported should be strengthened to equip countries to create their own data. There was a political risk if information coming into the country was different from that produced by the country itself. At the same time, it was important to insist on the objectivity of data. Experts responsible for delivering such information and data should be able to take on some of the challenges and then help communities to work with actors and decision makers in such areas as humanitarian work and natural resources to enable them to better understand the situations.

57. In the context of the World Meteorological Organization, the World Climate Conference-3 and the Global Framework for Climate Services acting at the national level, the four pillars of climate services required incrementally higher levels of expertise. It was critical to have such expertise and to enable the people creating, translating and using that information to work with the best and most objective information possible.

58. **Ms. Mueller** (Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator), summarizing the discussion, said that the specific vulnerabilities of small island States meant that climate change was an existential threat to them. Coordination and partnerships should be enhanced at all levels, while recognizing the critical roles national and regional organizations played in responding to extreme weather events. Humanitarian development and climate actors needed to work more closely with each other and pool their resources, tools and expertise to address the challenges.

59. Given the advances in forecasting and early warning systems, extreme weather events were no longer a surprise, but were rather predictable. Further steps should be taken towards anticipatory approaches to humanitarian assistance. Early warning needed to

translate into early action backed by reliable and timely financing and accurate data to mitigate the impact of extreme weather events and save lives. It was important to have plans and funding for early action in place before a disaster struck, and to scale up innovative financing instruments.

60. Disaster and climate risks should be considered when "building back better" in order to achieve resilient communities and ensure that disaster risk reduction was an integral part of sustainable development. In building the resilience of people vulnerable to climate shocks, the international community could collectively ensure that they were not left behind while addressing the relevant implications for human mobility. The Council had also heard questions and suggestions regarding how to strengthen its work and that of the United Nations.

61. **The President** said that he was shocked to learn of the discussion about moving an entire population from an island. One island in the Caribbean had almost been wiped out. Would that continue to happen in the future, especially over the next 20 to 30 years? He wondered how many times people would have to start over and rebuild their lives from scratch. It was important always to keep the children in mind, as they represented the future of society. Perhaps new settlement designs and construction materials should be considered. Settlement density would continue to increase and the world would be more urban than rural by 2050. What would that mean for humanity, and how should plans for the future be made? Given the reports heard by the Council during the meeting, it seemed likely that many island States would not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The violence and ferocity of recurring natural disasters, such as the 2011 tsunami in Japan, indicated that humans had done wrong to the planet.

62. Climate change was not an abstract threat, unseen and far away on the horizon. In fact, it was already a grim reality for many people, and it was clear that disasters could wipe out years of development gains in just a few hours. Millions of people were forced to leave their homes each year as disasters, climate change, environmental degradation and desertification made their livelihoods, particularly in agriculture, nearly impossible to maintain.

63. However, though extremely destructive, recurring and seasonal disasters were also predictable, and effective preparations could be made in advance, saving lives, livelihoods, time and money. Understanding the challenges and shortcomings of current practices was the first step. Local, national and regional capacities and leadership, supported by international organizations and their partners, would play a key role in strengthening resilience to disasters and the effects of climate change. Forecast-based financing, disaster risk insurance and other forms of innovative financing were encouraging, and should be scaled up to meet needs and complemented by other instruments. There were great opportunities for collaboration on addressing the issues; the international community had a responsibility to seize those opportunities for the benefit of current and future generations.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.